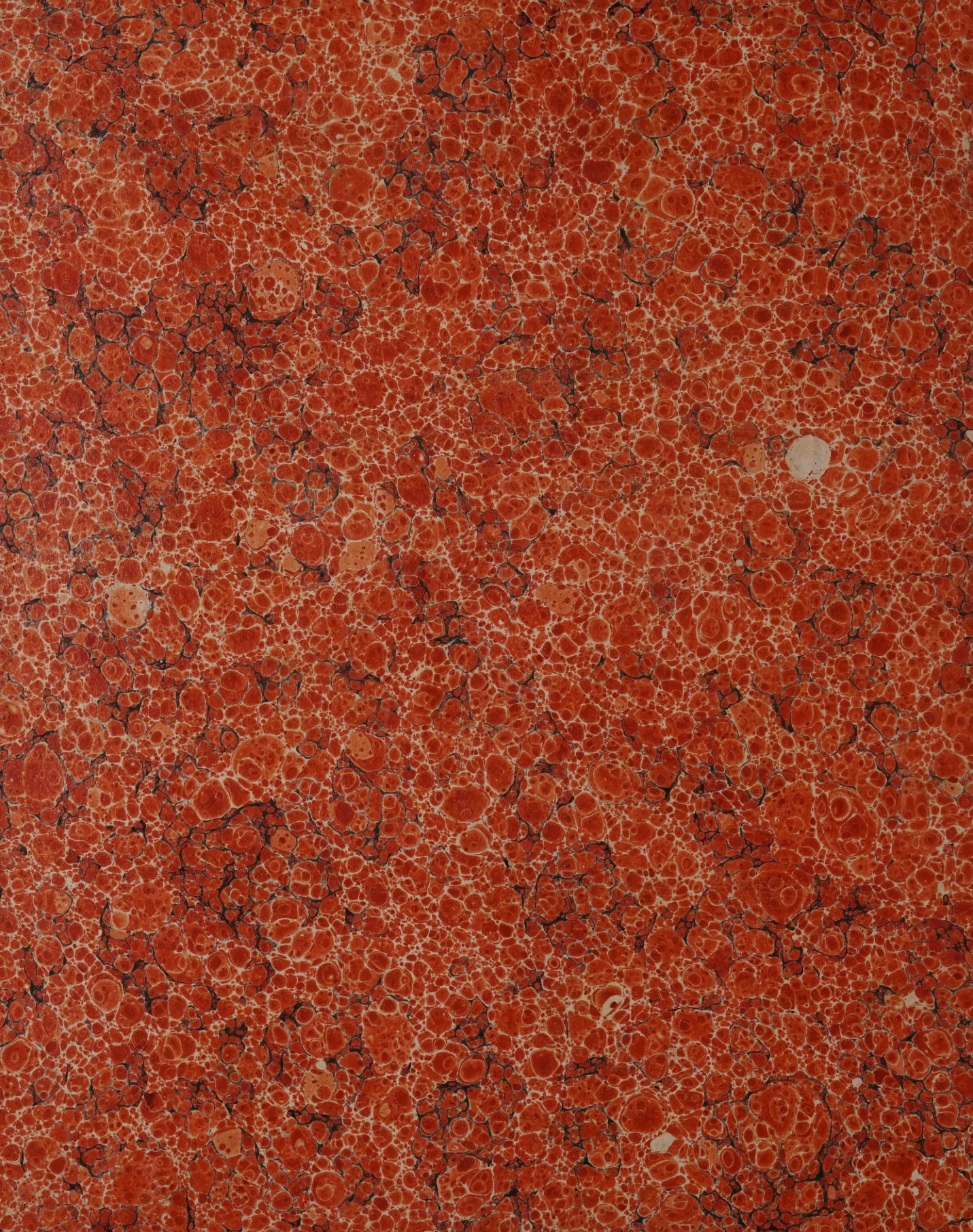
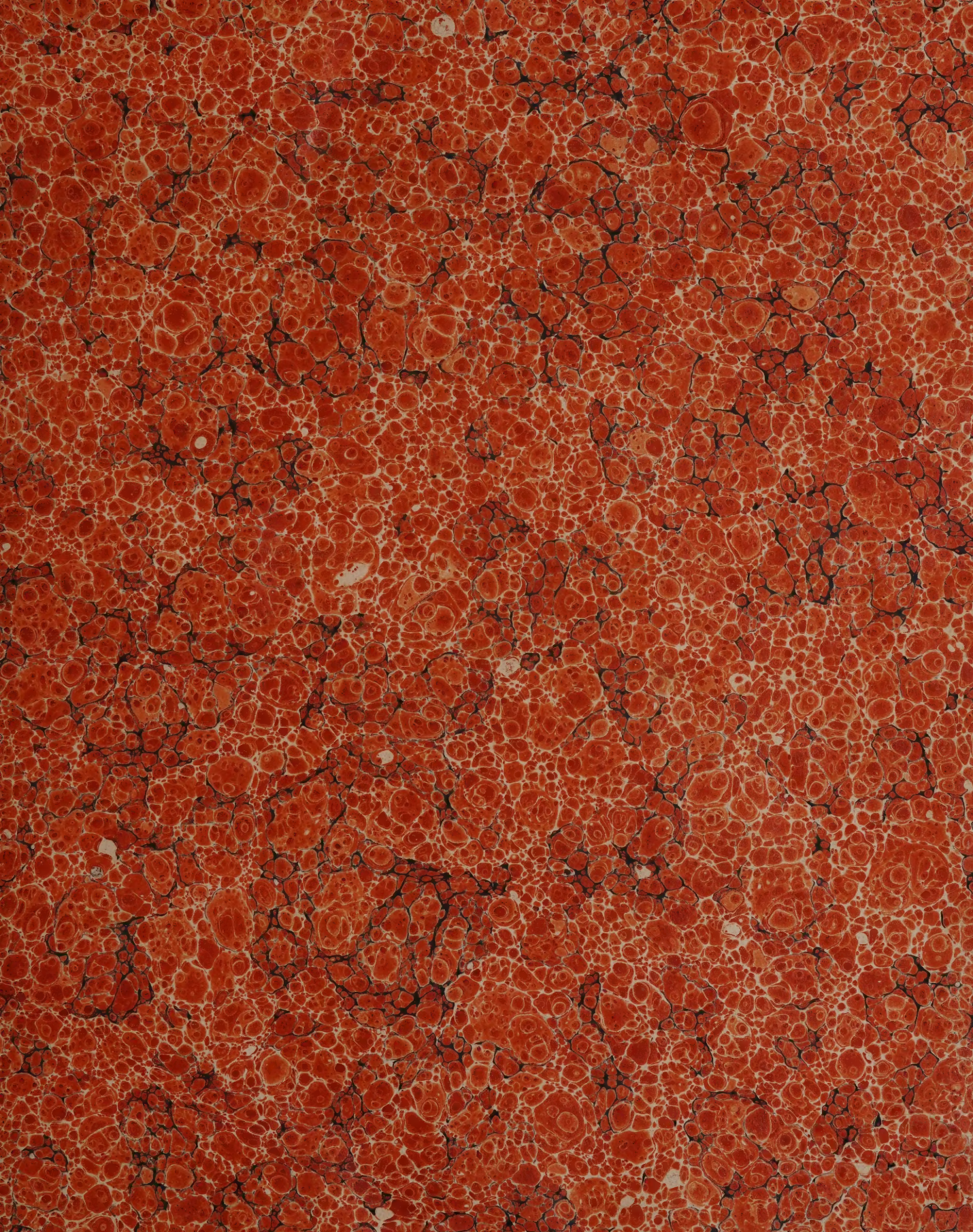








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THE
HUNTERIAN ORATION
IN
HONOUR OF SURGERY,
AND IN
MEMORY OF THOSE PRACTITIONERS BY WHOSE LABOURS
IT HAS BEEN ADVANCED,
INSTITUTED BY THE EXECUTORS OF
JOHN HUNTER,
DELIVERED IN THE THEATRE OF THE COLLEGE, FEBRUARY 14, 1814,
BY SIR EVERARD HOME, BART. F. R. S.
HONORARY PROFESSOR TO THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS, INSTIT. SC.
PARIS CORRESP., SERJEANT SURGEON TO THE KING, AND SENIOR
SURGEON TO ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. BULMER AND CO. CLEVELAND-ROW, ST. JAMES'S,
FOR G. AND W. NICOL, BOOKSELLERS TO HIS MAJESTY, PALL-MALL.

1814.

HUNTERIAN ORATION

HONOUR OF SURGERY

IN
MEMORY OF THOSE PRACTITIONERS WHOSE LABOURS
IT HAS BEEN ADVANCED



DELIVERED IN THE THEATRE OF THE COMEDY FEBRUARY 14 1814

BY SIR EVERARD HOME, BART. M.D.
HONORARY PROFESSOR TO THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS, WITH AN
ADDRESS CONCERNING THE PRESENT STATE OF THE ART, AND THE
PROGRESS TO ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. BAKER AND CO. CORNHILL AND ST. JAMES'S
FOR G. AND W. NICHOL, BOOKSELLERS TO HIS MAJESTY, PALM-MALL.

1814

TO
SIR WILLIAM BLIZARD

AND
HENRY CLINE, ESQ.

GOVERNORS,

AND TO
THE MEMBERS OF THE COURT OF ASSISTANTS OF THE
ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IN LONDON,

AT WHOSE REQUEST IT IS PUBLISHED,

THIS ORATION

IS INSCRIBED,

AS A MARK OF RESPECT, ESTEEM, AND REGARD,

BY THEIR MUCH OBLIGED FRIEND AND ASSOCIATE,

EVERARD HOME.

THE

HUNTERIAN ORATION.

WE are met together on this, the birth-day of the late John Hunter, to pay a tribute of praise to the memory of those Practitioners in Surgery, who when alive contributed by their labours to the advancement of that profession which we are now anxious still further to improve.

Every occasion that brings together the Members of our Establishment, and makes us better acquainted, one with another, must be attended with many advantages; but surely

no meeting can be productive of more benefit to the individuals, or conduce in a greater degree to the prosperity of the College than the present.

We are not, as has been the case upon some former occasions, brought together to exhaust the funds of the College by expensive entertainments; at which, some inconsiderate members who wished to level all distinctions, too often excited disturbances that greatly diminished the real good such festivals were intended to produce.

At the present meeting, the younger members have the opportunity of associating with their seniors; of contemplating the advantages to be derived from professional merit, supported by industry and good conduct, and of looking forward to the enjoyment of those

advantages which are only to be obtained by treading in the paths in which their seniors have trodden, and using the same means which they have used. Nor will emulation be confined to any one part of the Company here assembled; the oldest, the most experienced, and most successful practitioners among us, will on this occasion have the bright examples of those who formerly adorned the Profession, whose improvements have been handed down to us, and by whose works we are still enlightened, held up to their view; and although they may be satisfied with the wealth they have amassed, and the professional reputation they have acquired, they will, I trust, be stimulated to continue their exertions, that they may be transmitted to posterity in the annals of the College, and have their posthumous

fame recorded in the orations of future Anniversaries.

That the first institution of an establishment fraught with so many advantages to Surgery, should have been formed during the year when I have the honour of presiding as Master of the College, is highly gratifying to me; that your two Governors, Sir William Blizard, and Mr. Cline, should have fixed upon me to deliver this Oration I feel as a personal compliment; and I feel it more sensibly from being conscious that this place will be more ably filled by those two celebrated Anatomists, when each in his turn shall be called upon, as I trust he will be, to fill this Office.

In collecting materials for this Oration, I have a pride in declaring that I have not found

it necessary to extend my enquiry beyond the period at which our own body was incorporated. The first name I find recorded in the Annals of our Corporation is that of Wiseman, who must be considered as the Father of Surgery in this Country. He is therefore the first to whom I shall call your attention.

In the year 1660, having attained the highest eminence in his profession, he laid before the public the results of his experience in the different branches of Surgery. The esteem in which his knowledge of those subjects was held by the College of Physicians, is clearly expressed in the following declaration of their President and Censors, prefixed to his Works:

“ We judge the publication of the following Surgical Tracts will be of great use to Physicians and Surgeons.”

Wiseman acknowledges that twenty years of ill health gave him leisure to study and reflect, as well as to read the best Authors; and in his own practice he put their opinions to the test of experience. How well he has done this, is abundantly shewn in his Works.

Wiseman informs us that Anatomy was in high repute in this country, and says “ it had like to have done as great things in the institutionary part of Surgery, had the learned lectures of that excellent Surgeon, Dr. Reid* been continued by a succession of such professors, it being reasonable to imagine that the curiosity and industry that hath been so eminent in our Nation, in the Anatomical part, would have been the like in that also.

* Dr. Reid, here mentioned, was an ancestor to Dr. Reid, professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow in 1752.

Since it hath been our unhappiness to have that neglected, I hope it will not be ill taken if we, that are members of it, do supply this defect, by our own private labours. This hath been already done by Mr. Clewes, Mr. Weedall, and some others, whose laudable example I have adventured to follow, and to put my own private papers in print.”

From this declaration it appears that both the theory and the practice of Surgery were cultivated by the Physicians, till the results of Wiseman's experience were laid before the Public. To this great man, Surgery is much indebted. By confining his talents to this one branch of the healing art, the knowledge of it which he acquired, became more extensive and correct than that of any of the Physicians; and by his works, the cause of his

superiority was made known to a discerning public, who no longer continued to employ the graduates in medicine for the cure of Surgical complaints, although by its charter, the College of Physicians still remains in full possession of the right of performing operations in Surgery.

No one, I believe, thinks more highly of medical science than I do; no one has a greater respect for the Practitioners in Medicine, but the experience of forty years unremittingly employed in the pursuits of Surgery, has convinced me that it is not only an advantage that the treatment of diseases should be divided into two distinct branches, but that without such a division, neither Physic nor Surgery could have been brought to their present degree of perfection.

Physic has long been advanced to the rank of a Science, and it now stands conspicuously eminent among the learned professions: its reputation has been maintained by professors of great erudition and superior talents; indeed general learning and classical knowledge form part of the endowments which it has been always considered every Physician should possess; while Surgery has been held as an art or mystery; so much was it kept down by the power, the influence, and the learning of the Colleges founded for the education of the Students in Medicine.

Wiseman appears to have broken the shackles by which the Surgeons before his time were bound to the chariot wheels of the Physicians; but so long as Surgery was held as a mystery, and the greater part of the time

allotted for the education of those who were to practise it, was consumed in the menial employment of preparing the compositions used in their master's practice, it never could rise to a level with Physic ; the students of which, had no such duties to perform, there being a distinct and subordinate body of men to prepare such remedies as were to be administered.

The progress which has been made in the advancement of Surgery since the days of Wiseman, must be highly gratifying to my present audience. Our predecessors had no sooner emancipated themselves from the slavery they had been under to the Physicians, than they began to apply themselves to those studies which could best enable them to secure their independence ; they did not attempt to rival the Physicians in their know-

ledge of the Works of the Ancient Authors in the healing art; nor did they dispute with them for the palm of classical learning, but they applied themselves to Anatomy, not theoretically, but practically; they worked in it with labour and assiduity, they were conscious that those alone could bear away the palm, in the practice and improvement of Operative Surgery, who most excelled in their knowledge of Anatomical structure.

To what extent this knowledge was carried by the successors of Wiseman, particularly by Cheselden, is abundantly displayed in his valuable works upon that subject. Cheselden's knowledge of Anatomy, and the confidence which he derived from that knowledge, enabled him to make the improvements in the operation for the Stone, for which he was

afterwards so justly celebrated. His success in that operation was so unusual, that it not only raised him to the highest eminence among the Surgeons in his own Country, but carried his fame into every part of Europe, and induced the Academy of Sciences of Paris to send over one of the most skilful surgeons in that metropolis, to learn from Cheselden his mode of performing it. He afterwards received the thanks of the Academy as an acknowledgement of his superior skill and great liberality; and when the Academy of Surgery was instituted at Paris, Cheselden was the first foreign Member who was chosen into that body.

Cheselden had the great advantages of having been educated under Cowper, one of the best Teachers of Anatomy at that time

in London, and of studying Surgery in St. Thomas's Hospital.

Such was the progress he made in his Studies, that at twenty-two years of age he began to give lectures in Anatomy, and when only twenty-three, he was chosen a Fellow of the Royal Society. At twenty-five, he published his work upon the Anatomy of the Human Body, which was received by the public with so much avidity, that it went through six editions during his own life. He was not only elected one of the Surgeons to St. Thomas's Hospital, but from his reputation for cutting for the Stone, he was appointed Consulting Surgeon to St. George's Hospital, and to the Westminster Hospital.

Cheselden was not only successful in the practice of Surgery ; he likewise succeeded

in establishing a very important fact in Philosophy, which stands recorded in the Philosophical Transactions.

In couching a boy who had cataracts in both eyes, which had been so completely formed before birth, as to prevent the rays of light from making any impression upon the retina, he took advantage of this circumstance, to ascertain the effect which is produced upon an intelligent being the first time he sees external objects. The boy, the moment sight was given to him, believed that every object which was put before his eye was in immediate contact with it. This fact, ascertained by Cheselden, became the foundation upon which all philosophical reasoning upon this subject since that time, has been grounded, and it is universally admitted that all refe-

rence to the distance of objects, is independent of the original impression.

Thus did Cheselden connect the pursuits of Surgery with the researches of Philosophy. The fact which I have stated is incontrovertible; but facts have been lately brought forward in proof of the same effect not being produced upon all persons labouring under congenital blindness, immediately after being couched; and therefore tending to overthrow the general axiom that had been founded upon it.

These facts were laid before the Royal Society by a worthy member of this College, from the best of motives, an ardent desire to propagate truth, and they have been very deservedly registered in the Philosophical Transactions.

Since that time I have had the good fortune to meet with cases which enabled me to explain the reason why in some instances of congenital blindness there is an imperfect knowledge of distances immediately after being couched. It arises from the cataract not being sufficiently formed to exclude light, so that although there is no perception of objects, strong lights can be distinguished from darkness, and some knowledge of distances can be acquired. That I have been able to remove a doubt from the great philosophical truth which Cheselden had established, affords me no small satisfaction.

When I consider Cheselden to have been the man who in this country raised the Art of Surgery, as it was then termed, higher than any of his predecessors had done, I trust that

I have not said too much respecting him, nor allowed myself to exceed those bounds of praise which every one present will admit that his professional merits deserved. I will, with your indulgence, go a step further, and recommend to the younger part of my Auditors the history of his life, as the best model they can keep before their eyes in their professional career; a model upon which all those who are intended to pursue the profession of Surgery should be educated.

In recommending this great man as a pattern, no prejudice can be charged upon me, no motive but the desire of promoting the best interests of humanity in the improvement of the healing art.

Cheselden was first instructed in the school of Anatomy, and then attended to the practice

of a large public hospital. By such an education his talents were allowed to expand themselves, and he was enabled to raise himself to eminence as an Anatomist and a Surgeon.

I am led to believe that it was a consciousness of what he owed to Anatomy, that induced him to publish his splendid work on Osteology, as a tribute of gratitude to that Art, the knowledge of which was the foundation of all his greatness.

Cheselden's success must have had a wonderful effect upon the minds of all the young Students who were then attending the London Hospitals, and to him we must attribute the rapid strides which have been made since that time in the advancement of Surgery.

Though in tracing the progress of our profession in this country, I shall only mention a

single eminent Surgeon in any particular period of its history; it is however to be understood, that there were many others who flourished at the same time, highly deserving of being noticed, and although the limits of the present Oration prevent me from mentioning them, they will, I have no doubt, receive their just tribute of praise more ably bestowed upon them in future Orations.

From the time of Cheselden, the Metropolis has had a succession of able Surgeons, who have increased the reputation of the profession, both at home and abroad. From this number I shall proceed to select a regular series, not meaning to make any comparison between them, but to mention their particular merits, one of which has been common to them and their distinguished contemporaries,

and therefore must not be passed over in silence.

They have not only been the instructors of the succeeding generation of Surgeons, but they formed, under their own immediate direction, some favoured pupils, to whom without reserve they communicated the results of their experience for the benefit of posterity. Some of these pupils having arrived at the full maturity of their reputation, now form the highest ornaments of this College, and I trust will long continue their exertions for the good of mankind, and the benefit of the profession.

Next in succession to Cheselden is Sir Cæsar Hawkins. He has not, it is true, left us any records of the results of his experience, but his invention of the cutting gorget, by

which the operation of Lithotomy was rendered more simple, and therefore materially improved, gives him a fair claim to be mentioned on the present occasion, particularly after Cheselden. That the cutting gorget is a real improvement upon the instrument that had been previously employed, requires no other proof than its being now employed in all the difficult cases of the operation for the stone, by the most experienced members of this College. In cases of children, and persons of spare habits, it may be dispensed with, but where the urinary bladder is at a great distance from the external wound, the cutting gorget is an instrument which in my opinion is preferable to any other that has been invented.

After Sir Cæsar Hawkins, the name of Pott

presents itself upon our records. His works are without doubt in the possession of every Surgeon who now hears me. He laboured with success in improving the treatment of injuries of the head, of herniæ, and fractures of the limbs. He possessed great clearness of intellect, and decided with promptitude upon the measures proper to adopt. In the disease called Fistula in Ano, he had the sagacity to discover that the notions of his predecessors, respecting the distempered state of the surrounding parts which led to their removal was ill founded, and that the cure could be effected by simply dividing the rectum. By this means, an operation which before his time had been dangerous and severe, was rendered safe and comparatively mild. He also invented a bistoury, well adapted for laying

open the sinus, and this instrument still goes by his name.

Pott continued in the practice of his profession for a longer period than I believe any other Surgeon in London has done, being enabled by his bodily health, and led by his inclination, to remain at his post for more than half a century. One of his public labours, for which those who attended St. Bartholomew's Hospital were particularly indebted to him, was his giving Lectures on Practical Surgery gratuitously to the Pupils of the Hospital, so that they not only witnessed what he did, but had the motives by which he was actuated explained to them.

Next in succession to Pott is Hunter; for although the termination of their professional labours, which in both of them ended only

with their lives, happened nearly at the same time, there was more than a period of thirty years between them as Members of this College.

Hunter commenced his education in the School of Anatomy under his brother, Dr. William Hunter; a School in which Anatomy was not only taught, but practised more extensively than in any other school in this country. In France, at that time, there might have been an equal, and even greater facility in procuring subjects; but so able, so zealous, and so beneficent an instructor, did not exist.

Hunter, from being a learner, soon became a teacher. He did not work in Anatomy, as is usually done, for a few hours in the day, but was employed in it from the rising to the setting of the sun. He laid the foundation of

the valuable Collection of Preparations in Human Anatomy, which his Brother afterwards bequeathed to the College of Glasgow. He acquired those habits of application which continued with him during the rest of his life, and he became so enamoured of the art of making Anatomical Preparations, in which he was allowed to excel, that the human body offered too limited a field for the exercise of his talents: this led him to extend his pursuits by working in Comparative Anatomy, and forming the first materials of the splendid Collection which the liberality of Government has deposited in this College.

In the winter, 1748, Hunter began his Anatomical education. In the summer, 1749, he received his first lessons in Surgery, under Cheselden, at Chelsea Hospital. In 1751 he

became a Pupil at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. In 1754 he entered as a Pupil at St. George's Hospital, and in 1756 was appointed House Surgeon. In 1760, having finished his education, he went abroad as a Staff Surgeon to the army serving against Belleisle.

I have dwelt upon the particulars of his education, with a view to impress as forcibly as I am able upon the minds of many who now hear me, the great occasion, nay, I shall not surely express myself too strongly, if I say, the absolute necessity, there is for a complete Anatomical and Hospital education to those who look forward to place themselves in the higher ranks of our profession.

In these twelve years he made many discoveries which upon a former occasion I have been called upon to enumerate from this chair.

In 1763, Hunter returned to England, and settled in London. He brought back with him the same ardour for inquiries into the animal œconomy, and the same spirit of intense application to those pursuits by which he had been distinguished during the time he was prosecuting his studies; they constantly employed his time, and occupied his mind, whenever he was disengaged from the duties of his profession.

In 1767 he was chosen a Fellow of the Royal Society, and in 1769 one of the Surgeons to St. George's Hospital. In the year 1773, he first gave lectures on the theory and principles of Surgery, in which he promulgated the discoveries he had made respecting the nature of the blood, and the properties of which it is possessed; respecting the actions

of living matter, and the connection which subsists between them and the constitution at large : Doctrines, the result of his own enquiries, to which he had been led by the originality of his mode of thinking, and the intimate acquaintance he had acquired with the general laws of the animal œconomy.

Those doctrines, which forty years ago were considered by the older practitioners, as wild and extravagant, new and incomprehensible, are at length established, and admitted to contain the best explanation of the actions of living animal matter with which we are acquainted.

I have proceeded thus far in the history of his professional life, and have carried it to that period at which his doctrines had wrought a change in the education of Surgeons in this

metropolis; it was no longer confined to a knowledge of the structure of the human body, and of the operations which may safely be performed: it became extended to a knowledge of the actions in the animal œconomy productive of disease, as well as of those actions by means of which parts are restored to health.

From the time that Hunter first promulgated the results of his researches into the animal œconomy, he persevered unremittingly in rendering the explanation of his doctrines more satisfactory and more complete, and in adding to the Collection which now enriches the Museum of this College.

To do all this, he rose regularly at the dawn of day, and never ceased from his labours till the night was far advanced. Those

labours I have witnessed, so that I am better acquainted than any other man with his talents, his endowments, and his merits ; but such is the enthusiasm with which he inspired me, and so little has my partiality been diminished by the lapse of twenty years which have passed since his death, that I dare not trust myself to proceed further in his history, but shall leave the continuation of it to my successors in this office, who will, I am sure, do justice to the subject, and impartial justice is all that such a subject requires.

In tracing the gradual progress of Surgery through the different changes it has undergone, and the advancements it has made, I am led to consider, that from the time of Hunter our profession has no longer been confined within the narrow limits of a practical

art; assisted by his labours it has acquired a new character, has assumed a more elevated form, and has expanded itself into a science.

The scientific part of Surgery is not, it is true, within the reach of all those who practise the art; it can only be cultivated by such students as have been initiated in practical Anatomy, experimental enquiries into the laws of the animal œconomy, and into the means that are employed by Nature for the restoration of health.

This field of science thus opened to the Students in Surgery, should be cultivated with ardour: it forms the best road by which we can advance ourselves, or gain sufficiently the confidence of our patients to be entrusted with the higher duties of the profession: it is in a great measure our own: the forms of a medical

education requiring the graduates to follow other studies, and other researches, which necessarily occupy too large a portion of their time to admit of their prosecuting the difficult pursuits which I have enumerated, with that energy and perseverance which they require; for the whole of the active part of a man's life is scarcely long enough to enable him to excel in such investigations.

In what I have said respecting the difference between the acquirements of a Physician and a Surgeon, let not any thing be understood to imply the smallest disrespect to the study or practice of Physic. I wish the practice of Medicine ever to hold the first place among the branches of the healing art; its members are men of education, great learning, and are well versed in general science, they

have a knowledge of the symptoms of constitutional diseases; an acquaintance with the properties of medicines, and their effects upon the stomach in all the different states of that important organ, which those engaged in the pursuits and practice of Surgery can never obtain.

This province is sufficiently wide, and the objects to be attended to sufficiently numerous to occupy the whole of the talents, and time of those who take up that particular study; and nothing can so much advance the interests of the two professions, as a cordial co-operation between the members of each of them, in their endeavours to increase the general stock of knowledge, and to improve the treatment of diseases by the discovery of means more efficient than those that are at present in use.

From the list of distinguished Surgeons which I find in your records, whose celebrity is above my praise, I have selected only five on the present occasion, and this small number will, I trust, be sufficient to show that in our profession merit has not gone unrewarded, but that on the contrary, as large a proportion of wealth, reputation, and posthumous fame has been acquired by practitioners in Surgery, as has been obtained by men of eminence in any other pursuit.

I have been led to the choice of the individuals whose names have now been brought forward, from their having followed one another in nearly a regular succession through a period of more than a century and a half; which has enabled me more clearly to explain the advances that Surgery has made; the high

state of cultivation to which it has arrived; and the share which these great men had in raising it to its present elevation.

Wiseman procured for the profession freedom and independence, without which no art nor science can flourish.

Cheselden gave it celebrity, and connected it with science.

Sir Cæsar Hawkins made a considerable improvement in one of the instruments employed in the most important of surgical operations, and acquired a high reputation in his profession.

Pott brought the practical part of Surgery, in many diseases, to a greater degree of simplicity, and therefore considerably improved upon the practice of his predecessors.

(Hunter not only improved the practical

part of Surgery, but by his investigations and researches, brought it to a level with the other branches of philosophy, and connected all those Surgeons who pursue it upon this extended scale with the sons of science.

His Collection of Preparations, which the munificence of Government has bestowed upon this College, has enriched it beyond any other establishment for promoting the healing art.

I confess that I feel a pride in being enrolled among the practitioners in Surgery in these better days, in which we are surrounded by so many professional advantages; and I trust that every member of our College feels this pride equally with myself, and has the same disposition to exert his best energies in following the pursuits that tend to raise still

higher the reputation and celebrity of Surgery, as well as to support the rank it must now be admitted to hold, as not being among the least deserving of the liberal and philosophical Sciences.

